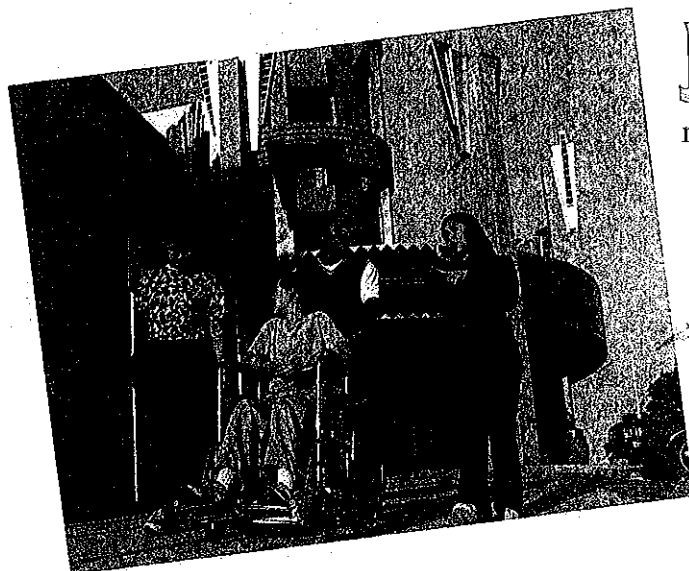
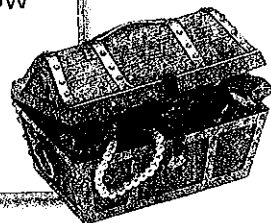


"That movie was really confusing," Brandon said to his friend Juan as they left the theater.

"The action was great, though," said Juan. "Can you believe how much that explorer had to go through to find the treasure?"

Juan's comment gave Brandon an idea. "I guess that was the whole point of the movie—to show all the adventures they had while they tried to find the lost treasure."



Juan and Brandon were right. To understand anything you read or see, you need to identify the main idea.

Learn the Skill

These steps will explain how to find the main idea in a written paragraph or in any kind of information that carries a message or a theme.

- ① **Look for an idea that all the sentences in the paragraph have in common.** In a well-written paragraph, most of the sentences provide details that support or explain a particular idea.
- ② **Identify the subject of the paragraph.** You may find the subject stated in several sentences. Or, you may find the subject in a topic sentence, one sentence that tells what the paragraph is about. The subject may also be stated in a title.
- ③ **State the main idea in your own words.** Write one or two versions of the main idea or topic. Then reread the passage to make sure that what you wrote accurately identifies the main idea.

Practice the Skill

Read the text in the box below, and then use the steps on page 54 to identify the main idea of the text.

- ① What idea do the sentences in the paragraph have in common?
- ② This paragraph does not have a title, so you will need to find the sentence or sentences that state the main idea. Is there a topic sentence?
- ③ First, try to come up with a title for the paragraph. Then turn the title into a complete sentence that identifies the main idea.

In 1901, an archaeologist discovered a stone pillar with an ancient set of laws—Hammurabi's Code. The black stone is almost eight feet tall and more than seven feet around. At its top is a carving of Hammurabi receiving the code of laws from the Babylonian god of justice. About 3,500 lines of cuneiform characters are carved into the stone. These inscriptions are Hammurabi's Code.



Apply the Skill

Turn to page 44, and read the paragraph titled An Eye for an Eye. Follow the steps on page 54 to identify the main idea of the paragraph.

The stele, or stone pillar, on which
Hammurabi's Code was written